repair levees outside the Corps program that were also ineligible for SCS assistance.[162] The Administration contracted with the Corps to supply technical assistance for both determining eligibility and project design.

The Department of Agriculture attempted to find a middle ground in these debates. In a speech before the National Governor's Association, Secretary Espy stated that a White House Task Force was looking at floodplain management with an eye toward determining whether some levees should not be rebuilt.[163] He also discussed the option of buying towns that lie in the floodplain and expanding the Wetlands Reserve Program (WRP) at a flood relief conference in Des Moines on August 26.[164] Shortly after this statement, Espy reassured Midwesterners that levees protecting cities and farmland were going to be rebuilt.[165]

SCS's own emergency work reflected the Secretary's middle-of-the-road approach. Although the Service was not a major builder of levees, it was obligated to repair eligible structures through the EWP program. SCS repair decisions were a function of EWP eligibility, financial constraints, White House policy, individual state conservationists, and the level of local cooperation with the Corps.

At a workshop on the EWP program in Kansas City, Missouri, in late July of 1993, the Corps and SCS seemed to reach an agreement based upon a 1986 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two agencies.[166] The Corps stressed the need to fulfill the MOU by enforcing consistent standards for sponsorship, cost-sharing, and maintenance. SCS was not to work on any levees on water courses with drainage areas over four hundred square miles (the same limit as for small watershed projects). All agreed that a one-stop center in each state for levee repair questions and requests was vital during the flood recovery process. These sites became the Disaster Field Offices (DFO's) where SCS, the Corps, and FEMA jointly received and considered requests for assistance. DFO's were established in the states with the most levee damage--Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri.

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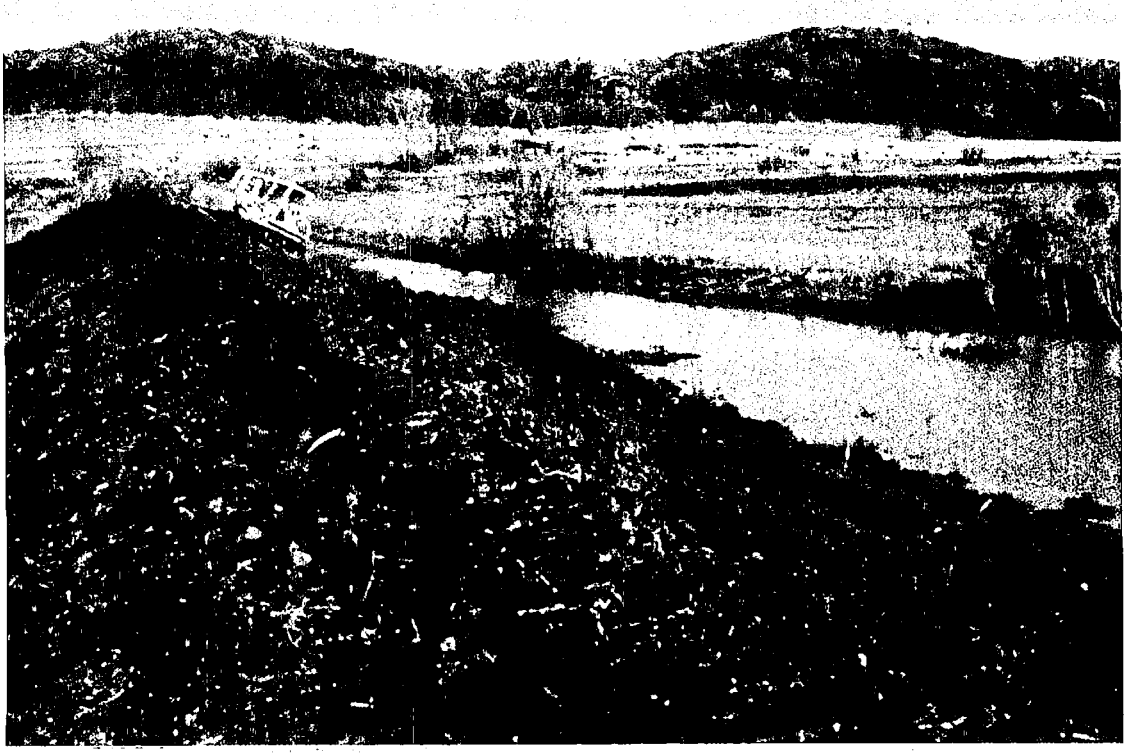
[162] Despite the efforts led by Senator Bond of Missouri, the Clinton administration requested and received only $18 million, not $150 million. These supplementary repairs were to be done under a 75-25 cost-share arrangement and to be built and maintained to the Corps' standards. See James Worsham, "Levee Repair Funds Fall Far Short of Missouri Plea," *Kansas City Star*, November 20, 1993.

[163] "Flood to Have Minimal Food Price Effect," Reuters wire service, August 16, 1993.

[164] Stephen Labaton, "U.S. Weighs Scrapping Levees for Flood Control," *New York Times*, August 28, 1993.

[165] "Alternatives to Rebuilding Levees Studied," *Washington Post*, August 27, 1993.

[166] This MOU was part of the Corps' overall effort to improve and standardize maintenance standards on levees during the late 1980's.



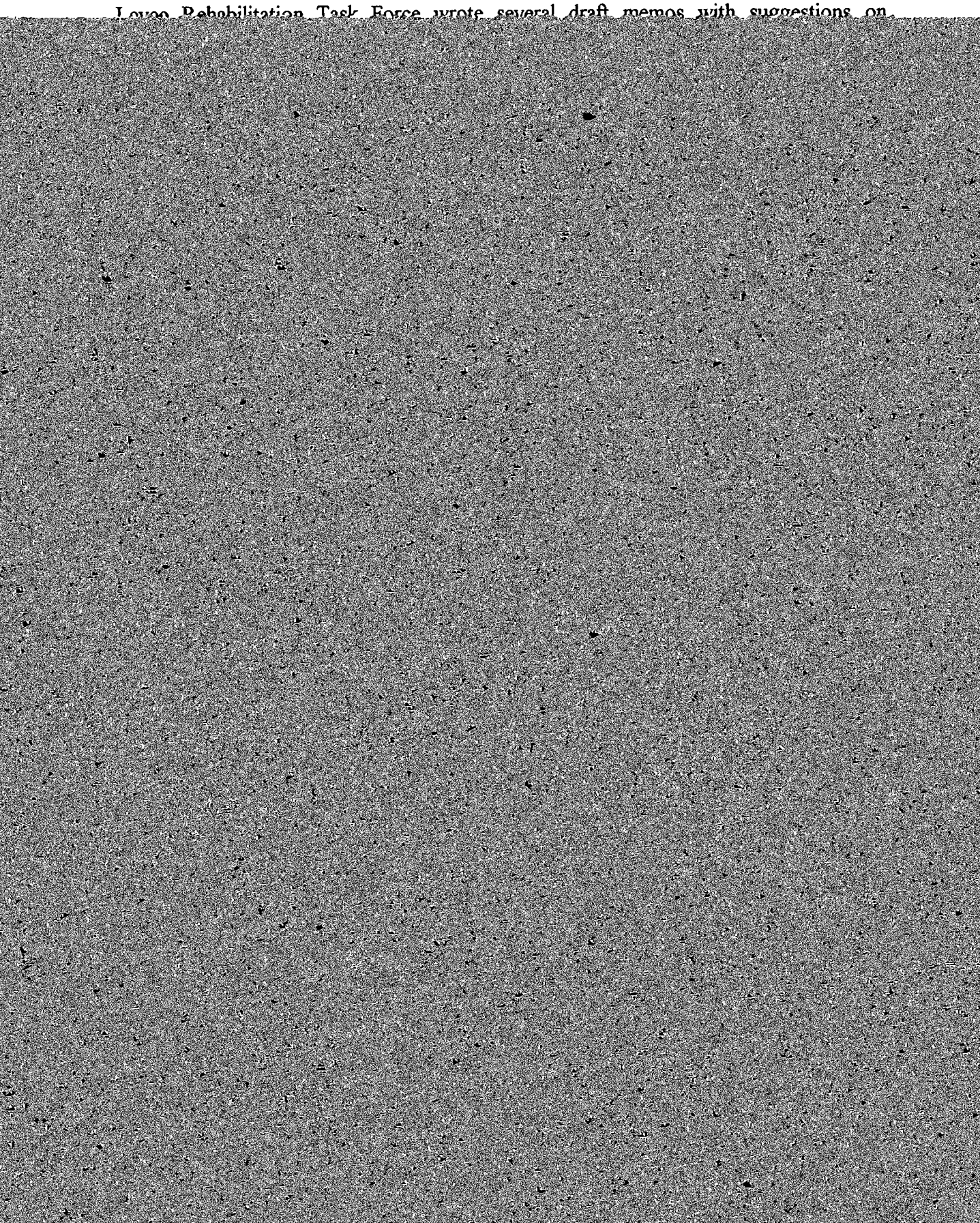
A contractor hired by SCS makes levee repairs along the Grand River in Missouri. Levee repair became one of the most contentious issues in the Emergency Watershed Protection efforts. Photo by Charles

Tom Wehri, reiterated great concern that the Corps' restrictions on levee repair would put the Service in an untenable political and legal position. There was still time for these debates during the summer of 1993 as the amount of levee repair work was minimal

protect life and property. Most of the Class II levees would be replaced also. Class III levees would require extensive input from FWS and EPA before any action would be taken. These classifications, however, had not been completed in the field.

Many discussions about the advisability of rebuilding levees took place within the White House and federal agencies. In late August a memo from T. J. Glauthier, Associate

Following their visit to Iowa, Missouri, and Illinois in early September, the Interagency Levee Rehabilitation Task Force wrote several draft memos with suggestions on



In the field, the progress of levee repair work at least partially reflected the Service's organizational structure, which gave each state conservationist a great deal of authority. Each state took a slightly different approach. In late 1993, Iowa was declining few requests, Missouri was generally following the Corps' lead, and Illinois was treading a path roughly in the middle. National headquarters staff explained the initial variation among the states. State conservationist Russ Mills had long experience with levees in Missouri and had seen some wiped out four or more times. This experience has made him more willing to reach agreements with the Corps and limit the number of levee repairs. Mills had no intention of doing any work in the 100-year floodplain of the Mississippi or Missouri rivers. On the other hand, Jeff Vonk, state conservationist in Iowa, was newer to his state and was more willing to rebuild structures. There was a gradual convergence of levee repair policies over the fall of 1993. By the spring of 1994, there were few differences between the states.

Shortly before Thanksgiving, the White House presented the next iteration of its long-term levee repair policy. Within each state, SCS and the Corps were to determine the geographical areas of their work. Based on the 1986 agreement between the two agencies, SCS would generally handle repairs for levees on waterways with a drainage area of less than four hundred square miles, though work in other areas was possible. The Service would not fund any work in areas under Corps jurisdiction. Levee work was to be prioritized based on factors such as the type of property protected, the record of maintenance by the levee sponsors, and the environmental impact of the repair. Shortly after this approach was transmitted to the states, winter weather began to halt repair work. Developments during early 1994 led to further modifications to the criteria for which levees SCS would or would not repair under its EWP program.

Pressure for more and faster levee repair increased in early 1994. The American Farm Bureau Federation stated several reasons why these repairs were needed quickly: 1) to protect farm income, 2) to preserve property values, and 3) to prevent future flooding.[172] Many of the complaints voiced through the press focused on the perception that the Corps was repairing too few levees too slowly. The Corps responded that there were often complicated disputes with levee districts or other sponsors over repairs. For example, the Engineers may find that it is more cost-effective to build around the edge of a major scour hole. On the other hand, the levee district members may want to restore as much cropland as possible by filling in the hole and rebuilding the levee in the exact position it was before the flood, a more expensive option.[173]

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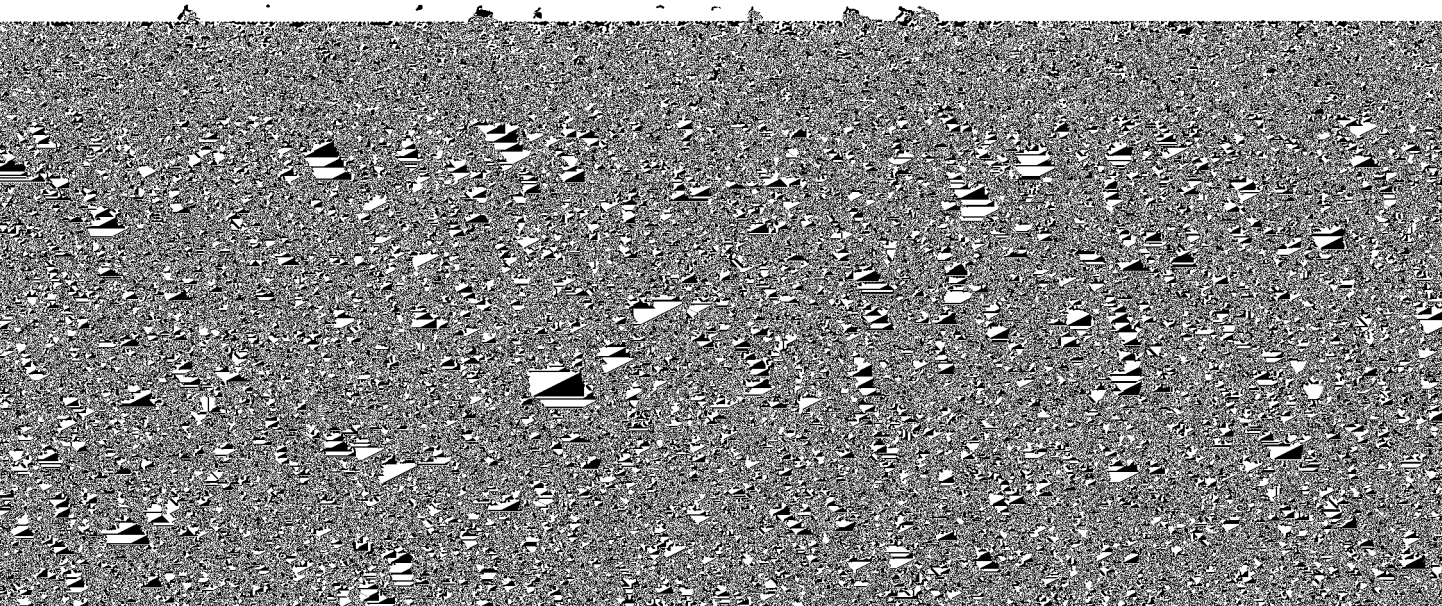
[172] "Failure to Rebuild Levees May Spur Flooding, Group Says," Knight-Ridder News Service, March 8, 1994.

[173] See Pringle Pipkin, "Floods Menace Battered Lands," *Kansas City Star*, April 13, 1994, and Sharon Cohen, "Living Without Levees: Pushing Paper, but Not Much Dirt," AP wire, April 16, 1994.

In 1994, it became increasingly clear that more levees were going to be repaired than most outside observers and government personnel had expected back in the summer and autumn of 1993. The supplemental appropriation of early 1994 provided money for regular EWP work and the wetlands program. The relief bill also gave $50 million to the Service to repair levees that had been rejected in 1993 by the Corps or SCS. These funds were to repair large agricultural levees with over four hundred square miles of drainage, thus negating the 1986 agreement between SCS and the Corps. This appropriation, along with a smaller amount of money ($18 million) given to EDA in late 1993, represented another shift in the federal policy on levee repair.

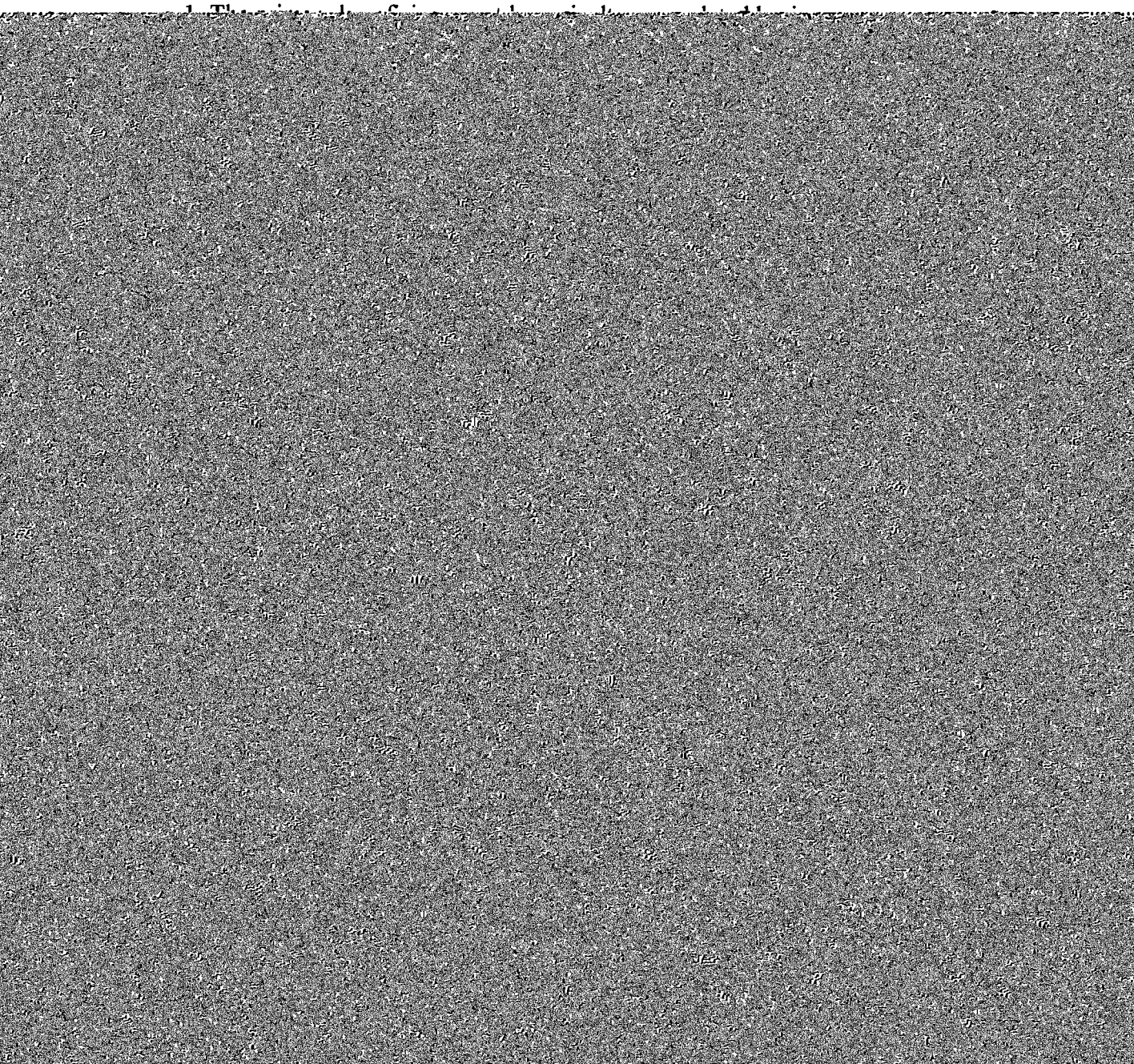
At the Kansas City flood recovery meeting in mid-March of 1994, the SCS stated that it planned to repair additional levees on the condition that the sponsors place these rehabilitated structures into the Corps' program. The Corps would then assume responsibility for enforcing standards and would make repairs after natural disasters in the future under their levee program. The Soil Conservation Service, FEMA, and Corps personnel met to discuss this criteria. Ed Hecker of the Corps said that they had rejected levee repairs for two main reasons: lack of proper sponsorship and lack of proper maintenance. The Corps and OMB were eager to see SCS repair only levees that had sponsorship problems, not those levee systems with maintenance deficiencies.[174] According to the EWP program rules, SCS could restore a levee to pre-flood conditions only. Therefore, if the levee had been ineligible for the Corps' program due to design or severe maintenance problems prior to the flood, then it would remain outside the program after repairs. Almost all present at the Kansas City meeting stated that the four hundred square mile limit on SCS repair work, which was based upon guidelines for the P.L. 566 program, was arbitrary and need not be followed for these levee repair jobs.

Although the details of the "hand-off" of these levees from SCS to the Corps were not worked out completely, both agencies took steps toward building a long-term plan to get levees into the Corps' maintenance program. The sponsor had to be informed that the



Some SCS staff expressed skepticism at the attempt to create rigid, long-term rules for which levees the Service or the Corps would repair. They pointed out that despite the decisions by the Corps not to repair many levees and the lobbying of the environmental community, when Congressmen wanted something repaired, it generally got done. Congress had essentially overridden the Army and SCS levee repair criteria with its $50 million supplemental appropriation. What was to stop this from happening after the next major flood?

The Service's supplemental levee repair criteria was finalized with OMB approval in early April. The following criteria for repairing levees with over four hundred square miles of drainage were then distributed to the nine flood states:

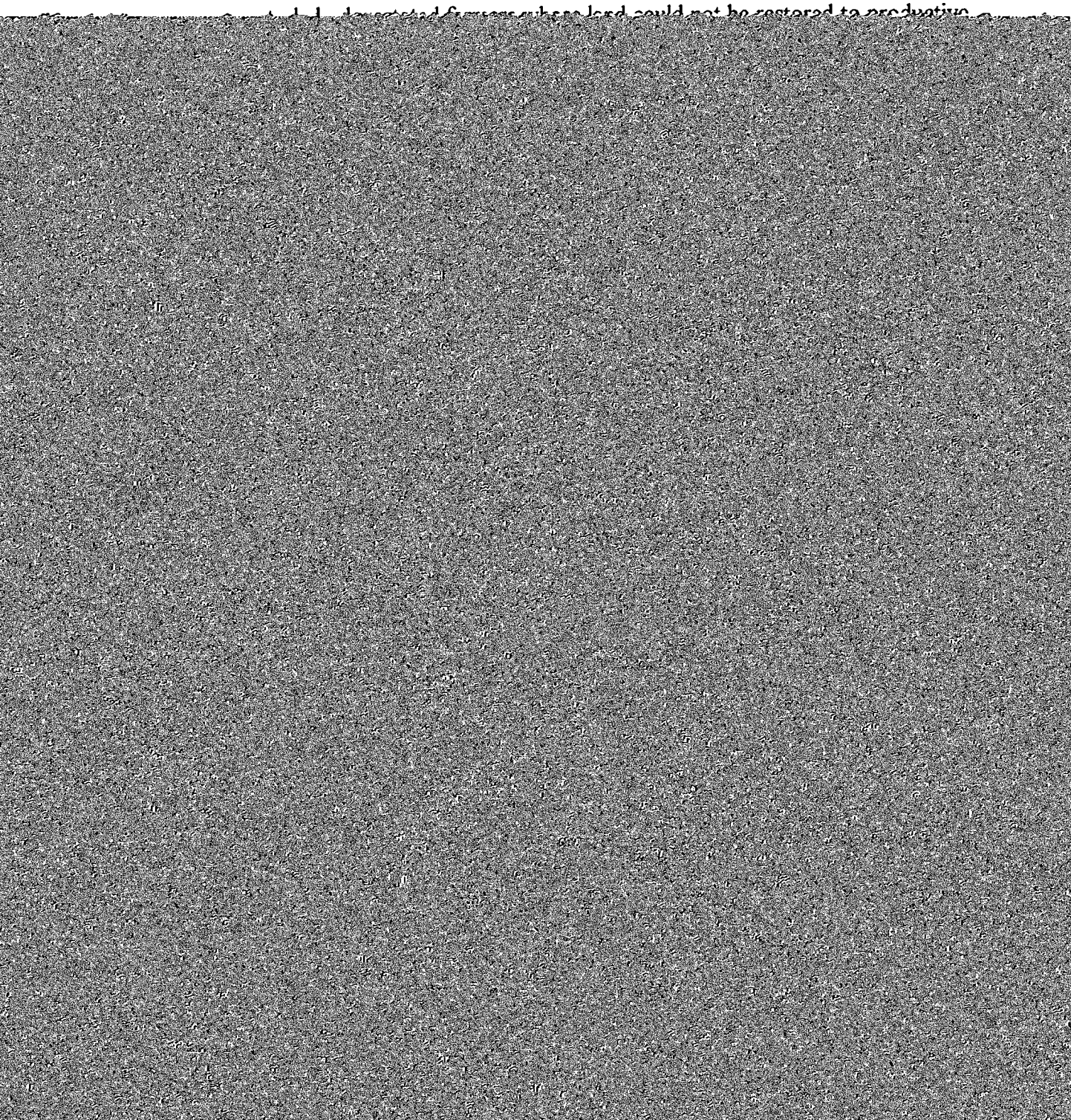


make firm levee repair decisions as quickly as possible. The Service was eager to find out which projects EDA was funding. A great deal of time was spent discussing how to transfer levees repaired by SCS under the 1994 supplemental appropriation into the Corps program. The Corps stressed that it wanted to create a common policy among all federal agencies. In light of the Corps' lack of popularity in much of the Midwest and the fact that SCS was only involved in temporary levee repair work, many in the Service were not eager to be tied to the Department of the Army's program.

SCS staff were concerned that the public was getting the impression that the Service would repair any levee rejected by EDA, the Corps, or anyone else. In fact, assistant state conservationists from Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri did not expect to spend more than a small portion of the $50 million made available in the supplemental appropriation. There were several reasons that the number of levees eligible for this emergency repair program was small. First, many levee districts balked at the

Wetlands Policy

The development of wetlands policies in 1993 and 1994 grew out of long-term trends like increasing interest in protecting the environment. It also stemmed from more recent stress on wetlands as a sensitive political issue, and the intense pressure from the media, the public, interest groups, and the government to respond quickly to the Midwest flood and limit future flood recovery costs.[180] Also, the purchase of wetlands easements was



bidding and evaluating process was complete and 49,888 acres were tentatively accepted. The average cost per acre was $923 ($742 for the easement, $52 for cost-share payments for restoration, $124 for SCS technical assistance, and $4 for appraisal fees).

The American Farmland Trust and the Soil and Water Conservation Society each provided their own evaluations of the WRP and found weaknesses in several key areas. First, almost twenty percent of farmers whose bids had been accepted by ASCS changed their minds. Therefore, ASCS had to go back to landowners it had rejected previously. Second, the lack of an open procedure for ranking and selecting wetlands deterred many from joining. Landowners wanted decisions to be made at the state or local level rather than in Washington. Third, many did not like the permanent nature of the easements. Finally, some landowners preferred to sell title to the land outright rather than sell the easement and lose almost all productive use of the land while retaining tax liability. SCS staff was aware of these problems and tried to develop the EWRP program accordingly.

SCS staff drew several other conclusions from the pilot program that would influence the emergency program in 1993 and 1994. First, the period between the farmer's first inquiries and the final purchase of the easement was too long. Second, the process of bids and evaluations, which wound its way from the local level all the way to Washington, was too complicated. Nevertheless, there was great potential for the program. The easements purchased under the pilot program represented only about twenty percent of the total acreage offered by landowners.[183]

In 1993 and 1994 attention re-focused on wetlands and one particular question: would more wetlands in the floodplains have reduced the severity of the Midwest flood? The *Chicago Tribune* published an article concerning the wetlands program which quoted ASCS official Jack Webb "the Agriculture Department official responsible for

Committee on Wetlands Characterization, which will issue a scientific definition of wetlands by September 30, 1994. He stated that most of the wetlands lost each year disappear because of agriculture and development in the upper Mississippi region and posited that the floods would have been less severe had there been more wetlands.[186] The increasing influence of opinions such as these was clear in 1993. By lessening future floods and moving infrastructure out of the floodplains, wetlands were seen as a way to reduce future damage and relief payments. Thus, a budgetary justification was offered for increasing the amount of wetlands in the floodplains.

Some experts pointed out that the 1993 flood was a uniquely large event that filled many floodplains from bluff to bluff. Thus, it was unfair to use it as a measurement of the effectiveness of levees or wetlands in flood control. A Corps of Engineers expert stated that, "On a flood like we had last year, it [wetlands] will have no effect. Wetlands are important, but not for flood reduction."[187] Overall, this viewpoint was in the minority.

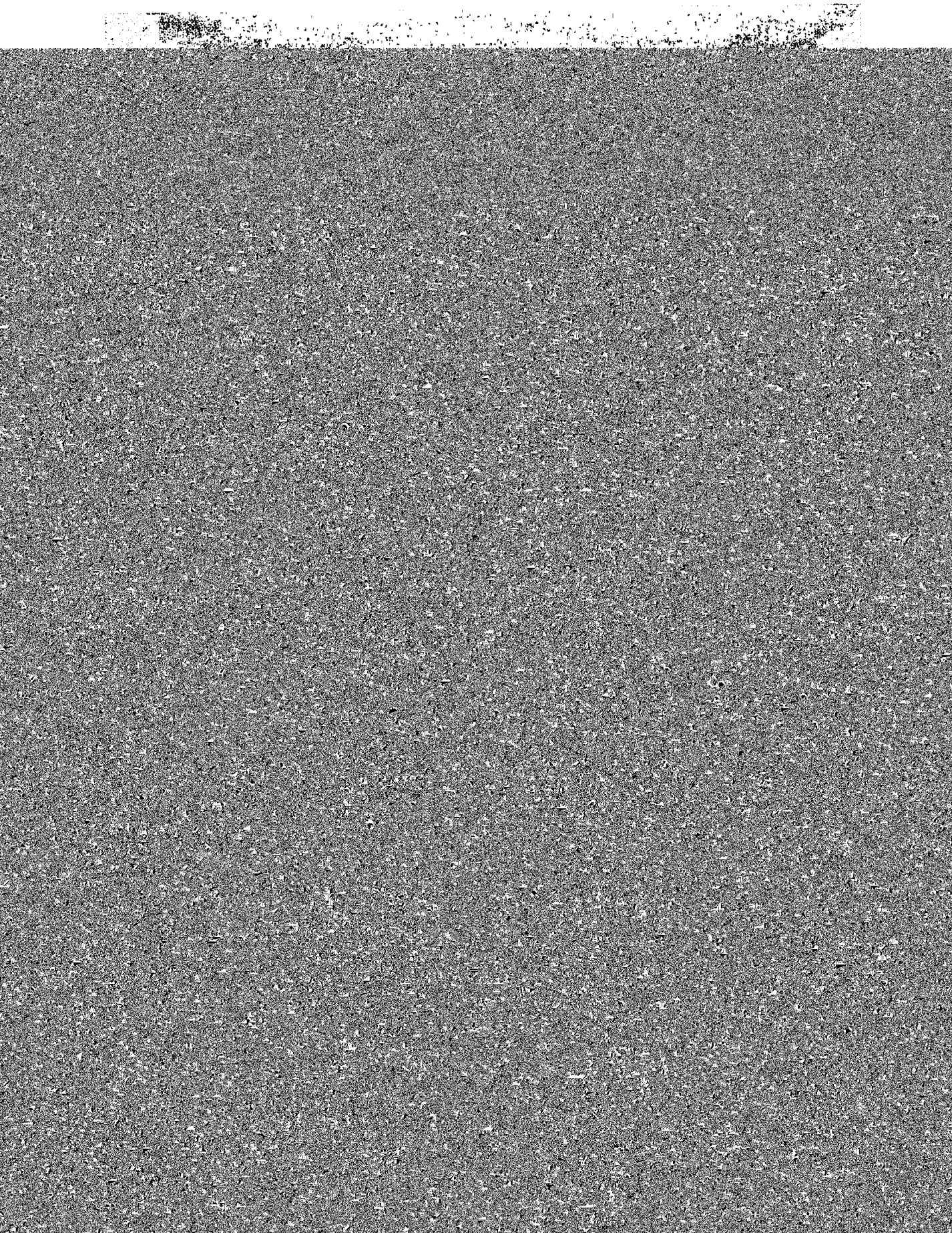
Environmental groups, the scientific community, Congress, commercial agriculture, the

continued use of the 1987 wetlands delineation until completion of the National Academy of Sciences study in September of 1994, 2) SCS designated as the lead agency for wetlands determinations for agricultural lands, and 3) Alaskan wetlands added to the program.[190]

In a separate press release on the same day, the Office of Environmental Policy set forth five general principles of the Clinton administration's wetlands policy:

1. No net loss is a short-term goal; increasing quality and quantity of wetlands is a long-term goal.
2. Regulatory programs must be clearer.
3. Public-private cooperative efforts are needed to reduce reliance on regulation.
4. A partnership is needed with state, tribal, and local governments.

enforcement of the wetlands rule for farmers will be left to the Agriculture

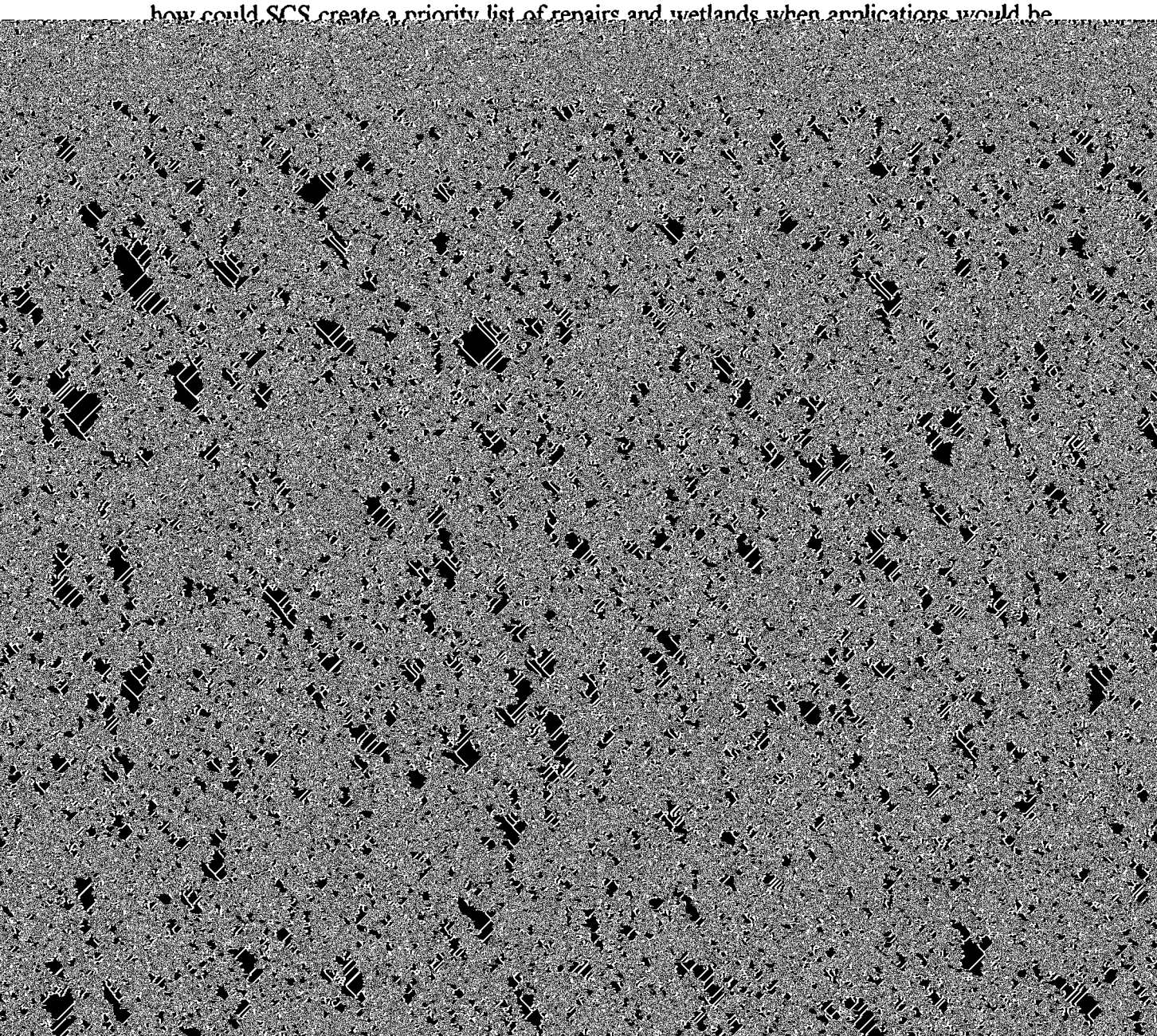


Land Program Manager with the Land Branch, stated that he thought ASCS and SCS were very close to agreeing on a cooperative program along the lines of the WRP. Discussion centered on the intent of Congress--did lawmakers expect the regular WRP program rules to be followed exactly? Billy Teels, national biologist with the Ecological Sciences Division, stressed that the Service could carry out the process without ASCS up to the point of setting an easement value. The goal was to publish rules by September 17.

They also discussed potential local obstacles to the emergency wetlands program. Some heads of drainage or levee districts might oppose the wetlands easements, since replacing farmland protected by levees with unprotected wetlands could eviscerate or severely weaken their organizations. Also, bitter disputes were expected in areas where only some landowners behind a levee wanted to move into the wetlands program. Would the other landowners then not have the protection of a repaired levee?

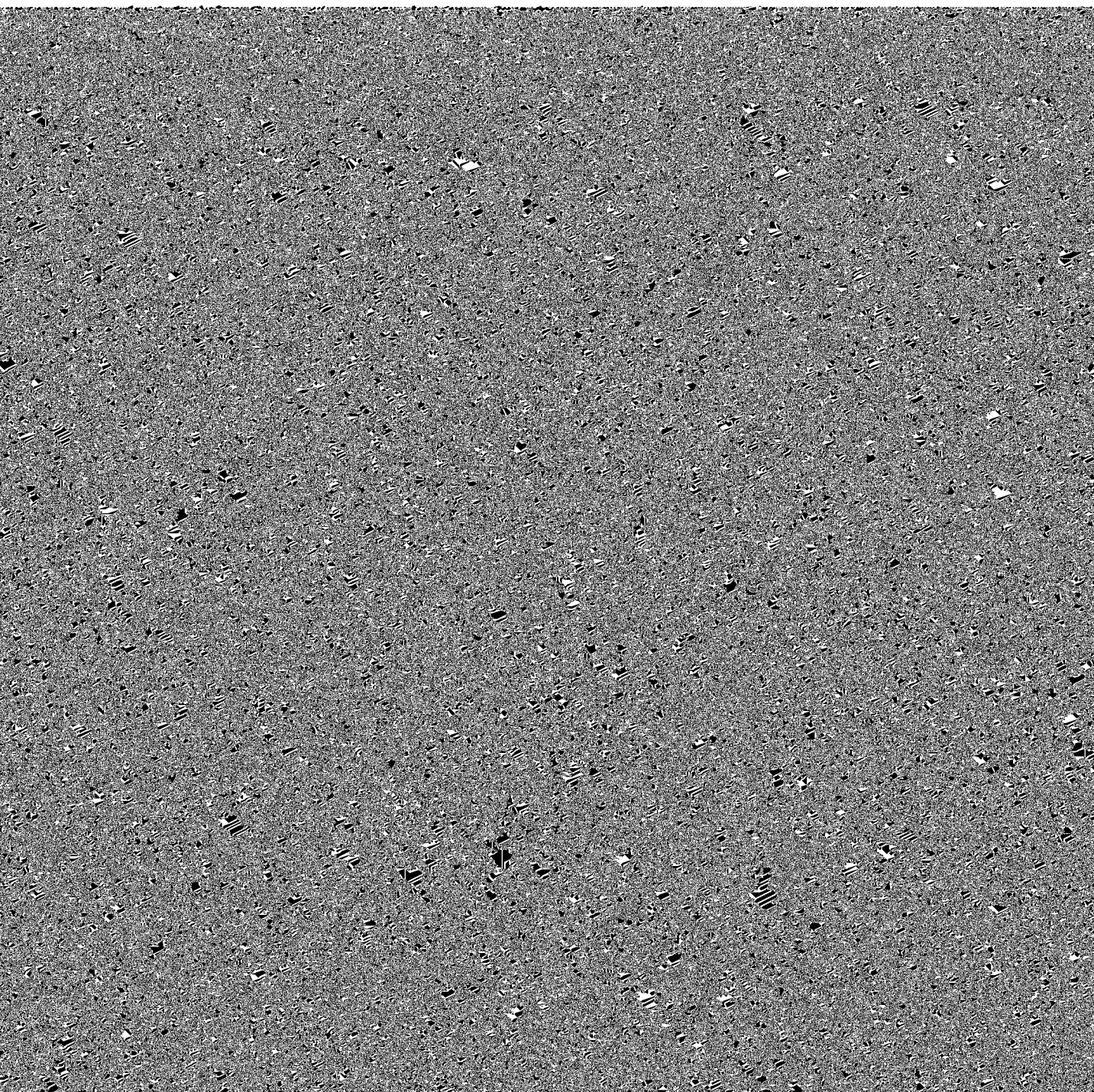
At a September 8 meeting, Lloyd Wright suggested that if ASCS would not cooperate

The Service wrestled with a variety of policy issues when modifying the WRP to fit the needs of the post-flood Midwest. In early September, Lloyd Wright chaired an interagency meeting with FWS, the Extension Service, and EPA in the Chief's office. Two of the most important agencies in the wetlands effort, ASCS and the Corps, did not attend. Wright began by explaining the latest draft wetlands program proposal. All of the flood states but North Dakota, whose state law did not allow perpetual easements, would be in the program. The general counsel for the Department of Agriculture cautioned that, based upon the statutory requirements of the law authorizing the EWP program, they must rebuild eligible levees if asked. The Service, however, could prioritize repairs to push some toward the wetlands option. For example, if landowners who control over fifty percent of the land in a levee district opted for wetlands over repairs, then the levee would be a low priority. All participants stressed the need to avoid any rigid cutoff dates for applications or repairs. Another problem then arose: how could SCS create a priority list of repairs and wetlands when applications would be



easements. The Service decided to utilize committees formed by each state conservationist. A representative from the American Farmland Trust suggested an escape clause to allow farmers to buy out of the easement (with interest) after thirty years. This proposal was rejected immediately.

By October 1, the team completed polishing the rules and Karl Otte began getting departmental clearances for publication in the *Federal Register*. The draft circular was distributed for comment at the annual meeting of all state conservationists in Ohio in early October. Staff also prepared a detailed handbook for the program, complete with sample forms and easement certifications. An EWRP training session, originally



After the first EWRP sign-up was completed in late 1993, the regular WRP program, under ASCS, held its second sign-up in early 1994. A total of $66.7 million was available for twenty states to enroll up to seventy-five thousand acres in the program. Unlike the EWRP program, this sign-up covered any wetlands, not just those inundated by the floods of 1993. The response was tremendous. By early April, landowners had offered almost six hundred thousand acres into the program. Of the twenty states, most important were Mississippi with offers for about ninety-one thousand acres, Louisiana for eighty-one thousand acres, Arkansas for seventy-one thousand acres, and Iowa with fifty-seven thousand acres.[205] In managing this sign-up, ASCS modified its procedures. To help farmers have a better understanding of the acceptable value for their land, the ASCS county committees provided the expected easement values, which were to be confirmed by regular appraisals. The goal was to reduce the number of landowners who were turned down or who rejected the program at the last minute.

At the March 1994 flood recovery meeting in Kansas City, SCS staff reviewed progress of the first EWRP sign-up, discussed changes to the program based on an audit by the department's Office of the Inspector General (OIG), and distributed part of the $340 million supplemental appropriation to be used for a second EWRP sign-up in 1994. SCS decided to dedicate a minimum of $85 million to the emergency wetlands program in 1994. SCS staff in Kansas City also stressed the need for uniformity on expenses such as restoration of wetlands, since cost estimates varied a great deal from state to state. The Midwest NTC was charged with oversight of this process. The 1994 sign-up would run from April 1 to December 31. This eight-month period was designed to enable landowners whose levee repair requests had been rejected the opportunity to enter the wetlands program.

[205] "Wetlands Reserve Program Oversubscribed," United Press International, April 8, 1994.

SCS EWRP Acres and Spending[206]
(All dollar amounts in thousands)

State	1993 Acres	1993 Funds	1994[207] Funds	Total Allocation
Illinois	1,300	$ 1,630	$ 3,300	$ 4,930
Iowa	5,344	4,790	25,400	30,190
Kansas	1,200	1,220	3,200	4,420
Minnesota	500	650	1,300	1,900
Missouri	9,715	6,800	42,100	48,900
Nebraska	200	220	500	720
South Dakota	4,300	2,230	9,200	11,430
TOTALS	25,400	$17,540	$85,000	$102,540

As a result of the audit by OIG, several minor changes were made to the EWRP program in March of 1994. The Service established clear guidelines for determining separately both the fair market value of the land and the easement value. The fair market value

(such as the Small Watershed Program) were threatened caused consternation on Capitol Hill. Midwestern members of Congress made clear to Chief Paul Johnson their displeasure that the watershed program was being reduced while wetlands were being expanded.[209] Also, many landowners wanted to sell their land and retire or move away, not remain responsible for a perpetual easement and tax liability for the property. Another complicating factor was that the flood destroyed as well as created wetlands, especially in the sand-covered areas of the Missouri River bottom.[210] The State Biologist for Missouri said that the Service will have to revisit areas covered with sand in five years to see if they had become wetlands. He estimated that as much as twenty-five percent of the formerly farmed wetlands were no longer wetlands.

Perhaps the flood and the Service's experience with easements in the Wetlands Reserve Program and Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program, as well as the future environmental easement activity, will help build a "toolbox" from which the government can select the best program to attack local problems in the floodplain, the prairie pothole region, endangered species habitat, or other high-priority areas.

Public Affairs Efforts

The Service's Office of Public Affairs in Washington and public affairs specialists in each of the nine flood state worked with the media and developed a wide variety of materials for distribution to the public. This included public meetings, press releases, videotapes, and slide shows. Two of the best-known publications were *Flood Facts* sheets, one on general questions and answers concerning SCS flood assistance and the other on the EWP program rules. Flood recovery work resulted in more positive publicity for the Service than any other single activity had in the past.

The Service reached out through and was sought out by electronic media. For example,

term recovery work. The article also stated that the flood showed that further streamlining of Department of Agriculture services was viable and vital. The concentration of USDA agencies in one office building due to flooding in Des Moines was cited as an example of successful cooperation.[221]

When SCS and its EWP work were mentioned, the agency usually received high marks from the press. For example, in July a favorable *Wall Street Journal* article stressed the costs of losing topsoil and the success of SCS's efforts such as the promotion of no-till farming.[222] Other Service reports supported this claim. Wisconsin stated that erosion losses on unprotected fields were three to five times greater than erosion losses on fields with conservation practices such as contour strip cropping and conservation tillage.[223]

Despite general success, an August 27 teleconference of all USDA public affairs officials involved with flood recovery did reveal some problems. First, many participants said that they had not heard of *Recovery Times* or FEMA's daily satellite feed program. Second, officials in the Midwest said the main task was not getting information out to the public; rather, it was getting decisions and guidance on major policies such as wetlands and levee repair. Farmers were desperate for specifics on the Wetlands Reserve Program, since this could directly affect their decision whether to plant next year. One other minor problem involved the accuracy of a publication. One of the *Flood Facts* brochures detailed assistance available from SCS. In Missouri, there were complaints about the wording of this brochure, since it seemed to suggest that the Service would provide financial assistance to farmers for flood damage. In reality, SCS would only provide technical assistance for agricultural lands damaged by erosion. At least one farmer wrote to a Missouri Senator and Secretary of Agriculture Espy to complain.

By November, two trends in the media were clear: first, the national media stopped paying much attention to the Midwest, especially as major brush fires occurred in southern California. Second, local coverage brought to light more frustrations with the department and the flood recovery effort in general. For example, in late November, the Secretary of Agriculture was criticized during his visit to Jefferson City, Missouri, by the Missouri Rural Crisis Center of Columbia. Its director claimed that the USDA was not

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221 Michael S. Arnold, "Espy to Ride the Crest of Flood Recovery Efforts," *Washington Post*, August 12, 1993.

222 The article contained several quotations from the Iowa state conservationist, Jeff Vonk. Scott McMurray, "Midwest Deluge Thwarts Efforts to Protect Soil," *Wall Street Journal*, July 20, 1993.

223 Karl F. Otte, Acting Director, Watershed Projects Division, to Leonard P. Mandrgoc, USDA Emergency Coordinator, Report #8, July 12, 1993.

doing enough to help farmers.[224] Others raised specific policies, such as Espy's decision to eliminate the acreage reduction in corn in 1994 due to 1993's poor harvest. This decision threatened to increase production and drive prices down.[225]

Although the Soil Conservation Service continued to keep the public informed of activities such as the Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program, conservation compliance, and Emergency Watershed Protection work through the local press in the Midwest, the national press largely forgot the floods and their aftermath in 1994.

[224] Dan Fitzpatrick and Beth Pigg, "USDA Secretary, Farmers Clash," *Columbia Missourian*, November 23, 1993.
[225] Marlene Lucas, "Farmers Fuming at Espy," *The Cedar Rapids Gazette*, November 18, 1993.

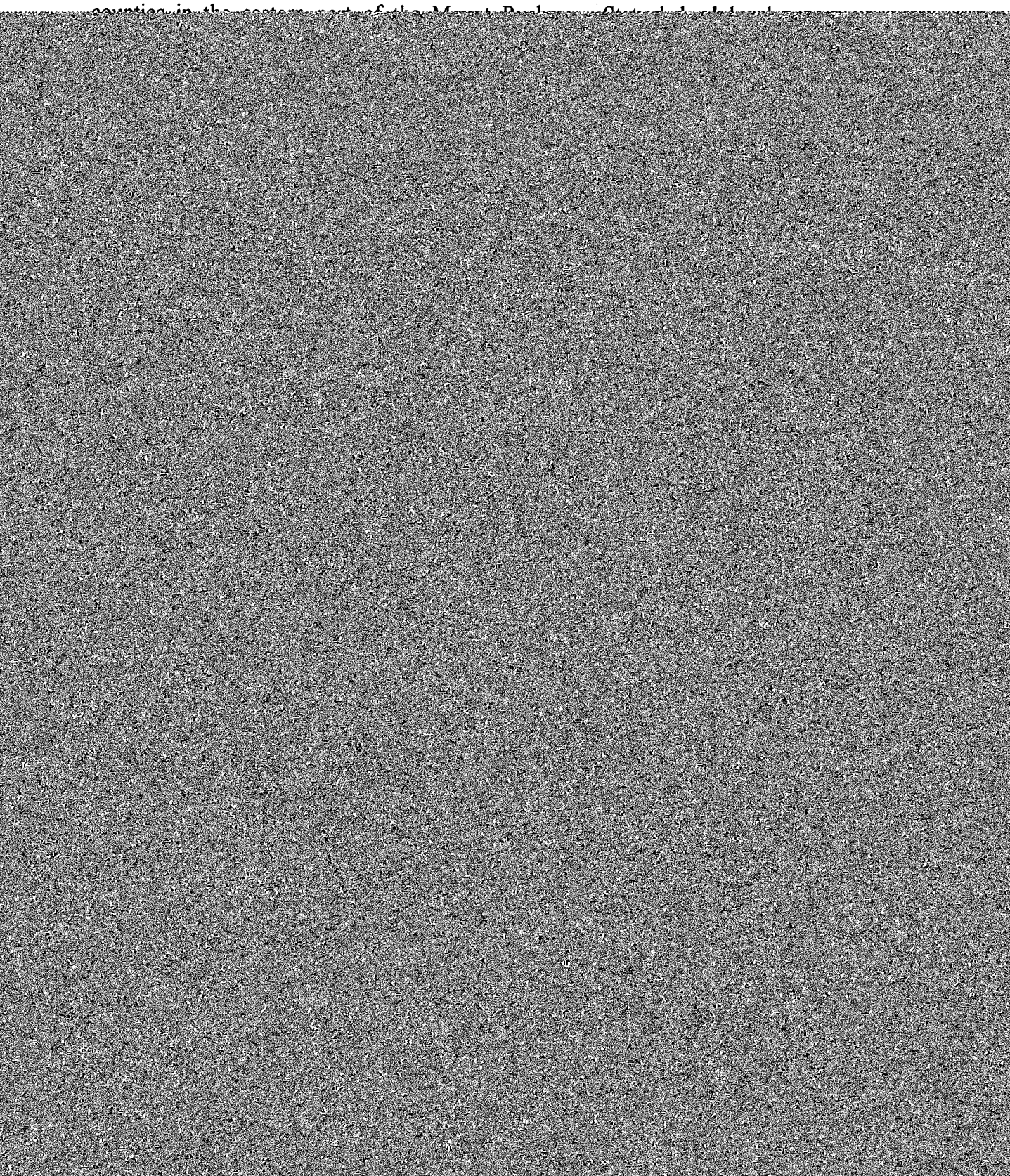
The Dakotas

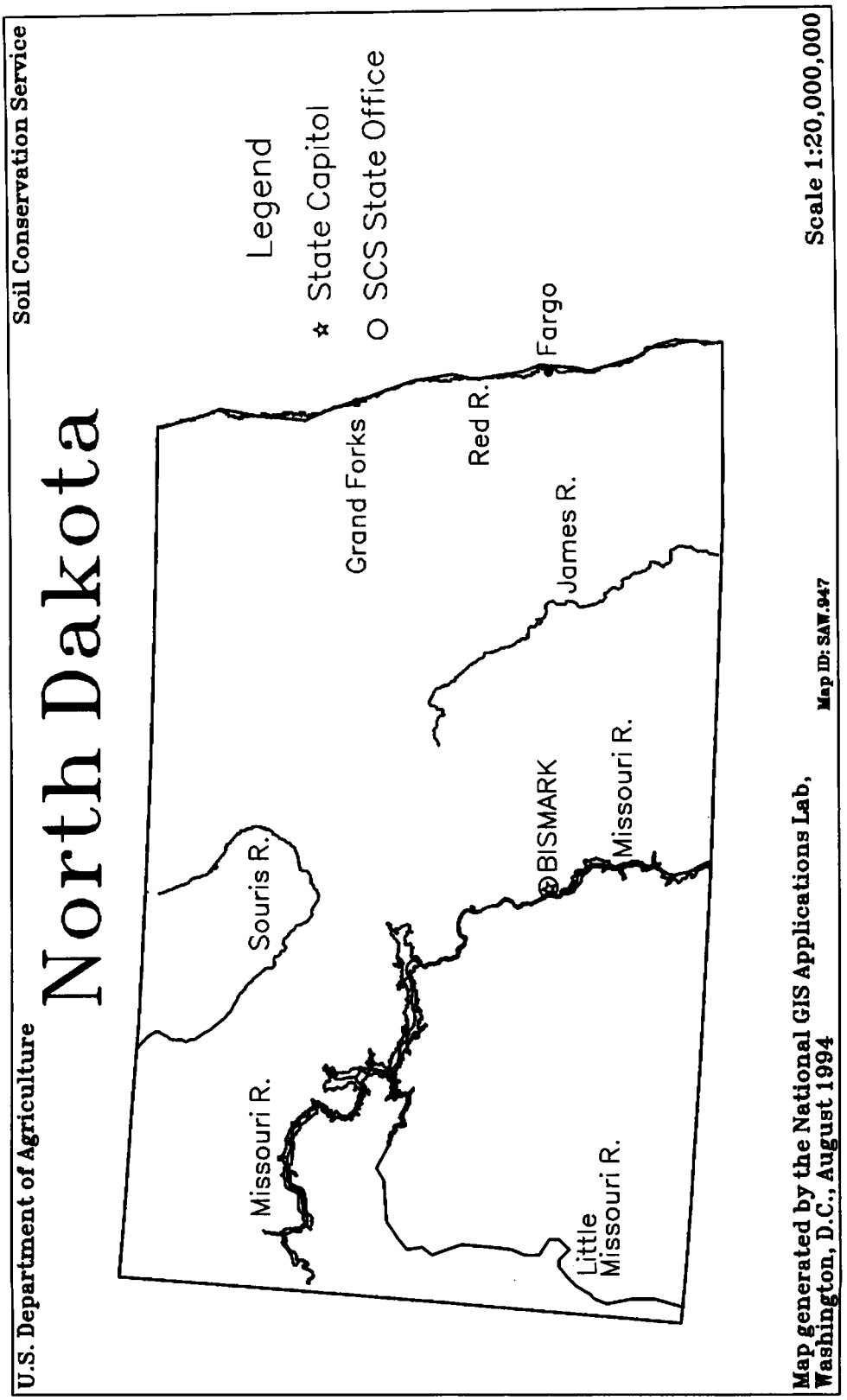
Examining the experiences of North and South Dakota highlights the great variation in flood damage and the different approaches taken in recovery work.

Overall, flood damage was less in North Dakota than in many of the other nine states. Staff in the state office stressed that issues of water supply and water quality have attracted more public concern recently. Nevertheless, at SCS meetings, North Dakota staff stated that there was a perception in the state that they received less attention in flood recovery efforts than "glamour areas" to the south. They pointed out that this neglect was seen not only within the ranks of SCS, but also with FEMA, which was accused of paying relatively little attention to North Dakota. One other problem state staff pointed out was that the Presidential disaster declaration came much later for North Dakota than other states. Emergency Watershed Protection work was well underway even before FEMA arrived. Thus, the emergency agency did little to cooperate with SCS or assist with DSR's during the late summer of 1993.

North Dakota's EWP effort was concentrated in the eastern third of the state and the north central region around the Souris River. Given the limited geographic nature and relatively few requests for EWP assistance, all work was coordinated out of the state office; no separate project offices were established. North Dakota held EWP and ECP training during the first week of August, even as more counties were declared disaster areas. The state office also contacted county commission boards, water resource boards, soil conservation districts, the state engineer, and the Governor's office in order to explain the assistance available through EWP and ECP.[226] By early August, two projects for debris removal around bridges had already been completed along the Sheyenne River in the southeastern part of the state. Most of the work focused on clearing streams around bridges. About 210 DSR's were received. Of the ninety eligible projects valued at around $1.4 million, eighty were for debris removal and ten for erosion control. In the realm of cultural resources, at least six EWP jobs were

sooner than anyone had expected. In this state, the great flood of 1993 began with excess precipitation in 1992. By April of 1993, excess rain on the saturated ground led Congressman Tim Johnson to call upon SCS to repair damaged agricultural levees. In July, SCS began to assist with damage assessment work. Field offices in forty-one




U.S. Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
North Dakota
Legend
State Capitol
SCS State Office
Souris R.
Missouri R.
Grand Forks
Red R.
Fargo
James R.
BISMARK
Missouri R.
Little Missouri R.
Map generated by the National GIS Applications Lab, Washington, D.C., August 1994
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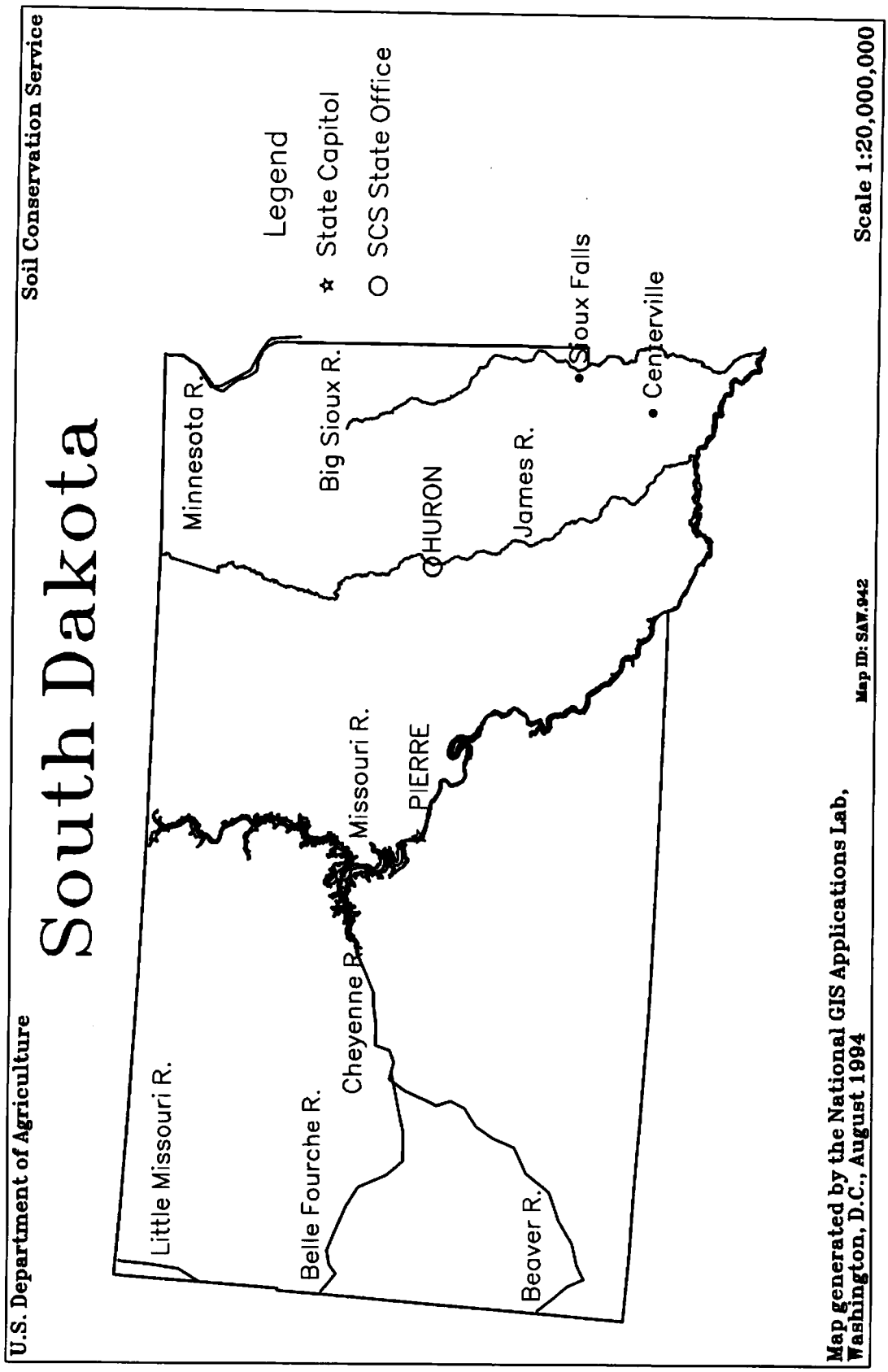
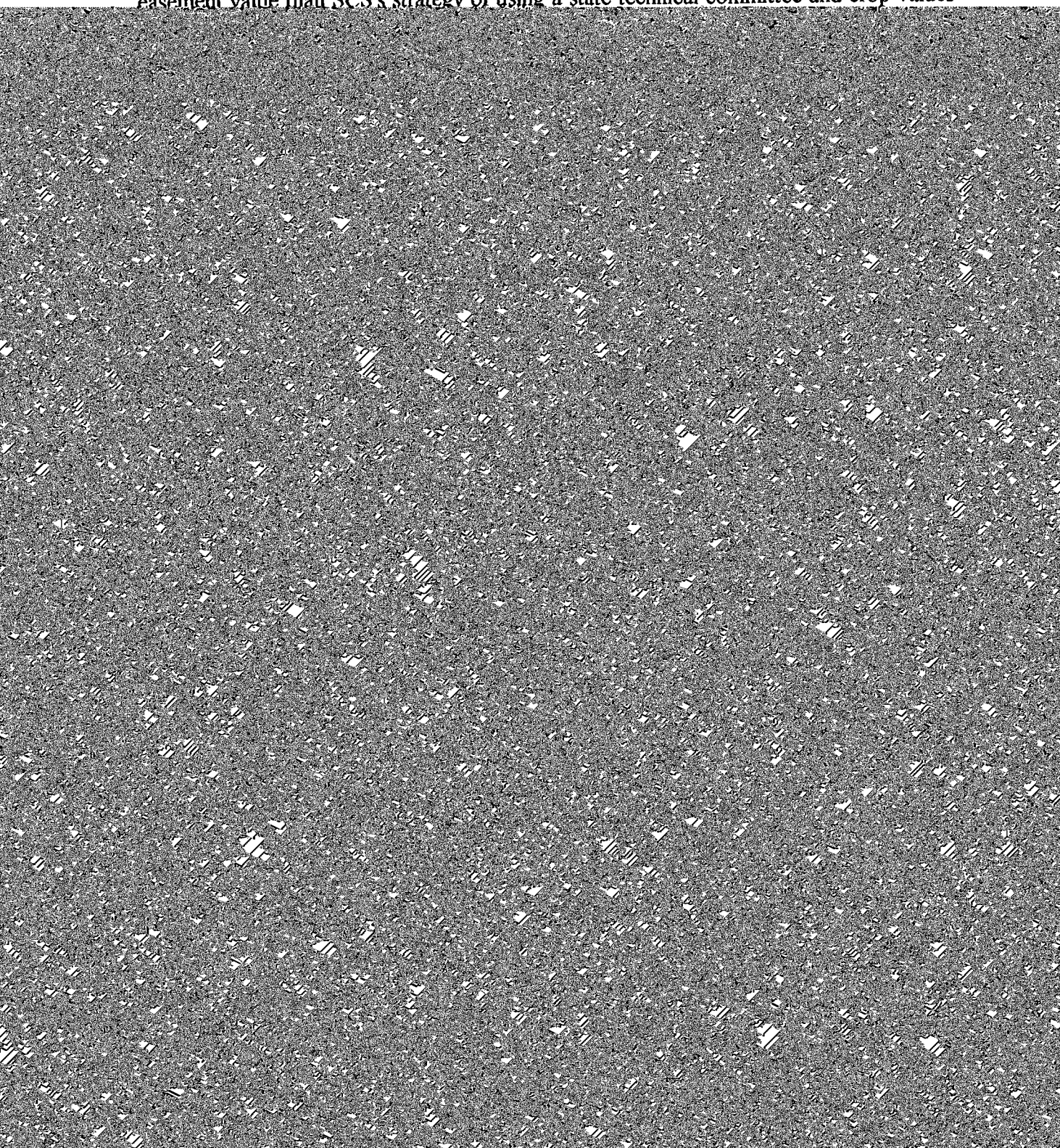

U.S. Department of Agriculture
Soil Conservation Service
South Dakota
Legend
State Capitol
SCS State Office
Minnesota R.
Big Sioux R.
James R.
Missouri R.
Cheyenne R.
Little Missouri R.
Belle Fourche R.
Beaver R.
PIERRE
HURON
Sioux Falls
Centerville
Scale 1:20,000,000
Map ID: SAM.942
Map generated by the National GIS Applications Lab, Washington, D.C., August 1994

Although South Dakota was not one of the pilot WRP states, staff did identify two million acres of wetlands. There were thirty-two sign-ups for Emergency Wetlands Reserve Program in December 1993. Even as SCS prepared the letters which would have finalized the easements, ASCS announced their upcoming sign-up for the WRP program. Farmers felt that they could get more money from the latter, and half rejected the Service's offers. Many hoped that ASCS's appraisal process would result in a higher easement value than SCS's strategy of using a state technical committee and crop values



the Service was bound by a variety of federal laws concerning wetlands and cultural resources, while counties may lack information or interest in these requirements. Experts at the North Dakota state offices estimated that its channel work could have cost up to $4 million. Some stretches of channel were as long as thirty-five miles. They urged the national-level SCS support this endeavor since landowners and SCS employees in North Dakota were already disappointed that they were unable to join in the emergency wetlands easements effort. Further, they pointed out that each of the flood states was able to devote its share of EWP funds toward the problem most pressing in their states--i.e., levee repair, streambank stabilization, or wetlands easements. Should not North Dakota staff be able to focus on the problem which that state's citizens found most severe? In the end, the Watershed Projects Division at national headquarters provided an additional one million dollars to assist in the most critical cases.[231] During the summer of 1994, SCS in North Dakota worked with water resource district boards to reach agreements for completing this work.

As was the case in North Dakota, some citizens in South Dakota wanted SCS to perform extensive channel clear-out work. Since state staff determined that this was routine maintenance and that most channel blockages were not the result of the 1993 floods, SCS refused to do the work. Also, the U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service was not in favor of it.

In early August of 1993, North Dakota reported major successes in flood control due to SCS's Small Watershed Program. For example, the English Coulee Dam and diversion project held back 350 acres of water up to twenty feet deep, thus protecting part of the University of North Dakota and the city of Grand Forks.[232] The dam and floodway had been constructed in response to a devastating flood in 1979. The project was completed in July 1992 at a cost of $7.5 million. Local communities and infrastructure were protected even after as much as ten inches of rain fell in the Grand Forks area in late July.[233]

Although many farmers had suffered crop losses due to excess moisture over three straight years (1991-1993), this type of damage was not eligible for assistance under the EWP program. SCS experts, however, did meet frequently with county disaster boards and landowners to offer technical advice on restoring cropland. In eastern North Dakota, fungus diseases that were flourishing in the cool and wet conditions represented

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231 "Critical" meant areas upstream and downstream from bridges and residential areas. In many ways, this was simply the expansion of the scope of earlier EWP debris removal work.

232 Lloyd E. Wright, Director, Watershed Projects Division, to Leonard P. Mandrgoc, USDA Emergency Coordinator, Report #23, August 2, 1993.

233 Hope Aadland, "The English Coulee Diversion Project: A Flood Success Story," *North Dakota Water* (October 1993).

a significant threat to agriculture. The state Department of Agriculture estimated that losses were up to twenty-five percent in some small grain fields.[234] Leroy Holtsclaw, assistant state conservationist in South Dakota, pointed out that the topography of much of the region could be likened to a coffee filter. There were few rivers or streams into which excess water could flow; it could only drain slowly away into the ground.

[234] Lloyd E. Wright, Director, Water and Power Division,